

648 a personal union since 1386. In 1569, under the Union of Lublin, [195] she lost her independence altogether, and until the partitions of Poland in 1772-93 she shared a common history with that country. One of the most enduring results of the Polish régime was the establishment of the Roman Catholic religion in what had hitherto been a practically pagan State, at a time when Lutheranism was being introduced by the Baltic Barons in Livonia and Estonia.¹

In the sixteenth century the power of the Teutonic Knights in the latter Provinces began to weaken under repeated assaults from the Russians, which reached their high-water-mark under Ivan the Terrible between 1558 and 1584. In 1521 Estonia had already accepted the protection of Sweden; and in 1560, after the dissolution of the Teutonic Order, Poland annexed Courland and Livonia, although a large part of the latter was afterwards wrested from her by the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, in 1626. The districts which thus came under Swedish rule enjoyed a somewhat more liberal régime than had hitherto been their lot. The privileges of the Baltic Barons were curtailed, and something was done towards national education—it was during this period that the University of Dorpat was founded in Estonia. In Courland, however, where the Barons were left a very free hand, owing to Poland's preoccupations elsewhere, the peasants were no better treated during this period than they had been before.

Russian Rule (1710-1918). Finally, the eighteenth century saw the defeat of Charles XII by Peter the Great at Poltava (1709) and the gradual passing of control over the Baltic Provinces from the declining Swedish Empire and Poland to Russia.² The period of Russian domination, which lasted down to the outbreak of the World War, opened ominously, although conditions improved somewhat during the first half of the nineteenth century.

177 In Lithuania the partition of Poland was followed by a period of [195] Russification; the Orthodox religion was introduced, and Catholic [871] ecclesiastical property was to a large extent handed over to the Orthodox Church; the University of Vilna and the higher schools were closed, and the use of the Lithuanian language was forbidden in all schools. In 1861 the peasants were liberated and granted the right to hold a small amount of land; but, after the Polish insurrection of 1863, which was sternly suppressed by Muraviev, it was decreed that

¹ Swedish rule was later a decisive factor in the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Estonia.

² Riga was captured in 1710 and Neval soon after. Livonia and Estonia were ceded to Russia by the Peace of Nystadt in 1721; Courland gradually became to all intents and purposes a Russian protectorate, and in 1796 formally acknowledged the suzerainty of Catherine the Great. In the course of the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795 the whole of Lithuania proper passed into the hands of Russia, although Mamel remained part of Prussia, in which it had been incorporated in the sixteenth century.

only adherents of the Orthodox religion might hold land, and the 421 ● following year the writing of Lithuanian in Latin characters was for- 565 bidden. In 1894 Catholics were forbidden to hold any position, how- [792] ever small, in the central or local administrative services. None the [184] less, the end of the century saw the foundation of a nationalist movement, led by Dr. Basanavicius, and the acquisition by the peasantry of a certain amount of land in small-holdings through the establishment of land banks and co-operative societies. In 1904 the law forbidding the printing of the Lithuanian language in Latin characters was repealed, and the flood of nationalist literature increased in volume.

In the other Provinces the situation of the peasants was even worse than in Lithuania, owing to the presence of the Baltic Barons, who were always loyal subjects of the Tsars, and who from the outset took a leading part in the administration of the Russian Empire. Under Russian rule the Barons secured the restoration of all privileges of which they had been deprived under the Swedish régime; moreover, they now created a closed corporation, consisting of 172 families which alone had the right to own land. Various attempts made by successive Tsars to improve the lot of the peasants were frustrated by the Barons, and serious rebellions were put down in 1783-4 and again in 1802. After the latter, Alexander I issued an ordinance in 1804 limiting serfdom, but its effects were nullified by the Barons. Laws abolishing personal serfdom altogether in Estonia (1816), Courland (1817), and Livonia (1819)¹ did little to improve matters, since freedom was of little use to peasants with no claim either to tenancy or ownership of land. In 1849, however, Alexander II enacted a new Agrarian Law abolishing forced labour and providing for the purchase or hire of certain lands by the peasant communes. Under Alexander III (1881-94) a determined policy of 177 Russification was initiated, aimed as much at the German as at the 671 native population; indeed, the later native movement of 1905 may 192 be traced largely to the indirect encouragement which it now received from the Russian Government's anti-German policy. Russian law and police organization were substituted for the existing German system, and the Russian language was made compulsory in schools. On the other hand, Letts and Estonians were allowed to hold Government posts. Towards the end of the century, too, there was an improvement in the material status of the peasantry; the 565 Russian railways brought trade to the ports of Riga and Libau, and in the towns a small proletarian class grew up which was ripe for the spread of revolutionary ideas. As in Lithuania, nationalist movements 186 were set on foot, and Young Lett and Estonian parties were formed. 668

These movements, in all three countries, were quick to exploit the

¹ The first emancipation of serfs in the whole Empire was in the Baltic Provinces.